

Hello, my name is Chloe Feit and I am a 9th grader at Classical High School. I am part of the Leadership Team at Providence Student Union and last year I worked on the Providence Public School District's Community Design Team. I have been going to Providence Public Schools since kindergarten and I am determined to help make them better. Because of this, I strongly support the removal of School Resource Officers in Providence Public Schools.

I stand with the efforts of the Providence Alliance for Student Safety (PASS) to terminate the contract between the Providence Police Department and the Providence Public School District. The coalition and students in the greater Providence community have been asking for this action for over 3 years, and now more than ever it is critical that we take this transformative step. I stand in solidarity with PASS and their Counselors not Cops campaign and I have started to work with them because I believe that all students have the right to safe, healthy, and equitable schools. I believe that this right would not be upheld if this bill passes through the House.

There is no conclusive evidence that School Resource Officers make our schools any safer. Instead, the presence of SRO's has only been shown to lead to higher rates of suspensions, expulsions, and arrests. Furthermore, these punitive actions disproportionately impact Black and Brown students, LGBTQ+ students, and disabled students. In Providence Public Schools, the vast majority of arrests (about 92%) were of students of color. Black students make up 16% of overall PPSD enrollment and 30% of all student arrests. Nationally, Black students are arrested at a rate 3 times that of white students. In some states, they are 8 times as likely to be arrested. There are also dozens of documented and even more undocumented, incidents in the past decade in which School Resource Officers have tasered, pepper sprayed, injured, and used force on students to inflict physical harm. All forms of violence, and criminalization of students must come to an end. This violence does not belong in a building full of children.

Real safe, healthy, and equitable schools promote and prioritize the mental health and well-being of students through counselors, nurses, and other social, emotional and physical health providers, not armed police officers. Schools that employ these beneficial services that actually help students' well-being, will see improved attendance rates, lower rates of suspensions and other disciplinary incidents, improve school safety, and increase graduation rates. Without police in the halls.

It's time that the Rhode Island Department of Education actually listens to, and acts towards a future that is truly equitable and safe for all of their students and their educational environments, one that does not include police officers in schools. Let's call it what it is: "student resource officer" does not accurately capture who, exactly, is in our schools. These are armed police officers, but what we truly need are social service professionals. #PoliceFreeSchools now.

**In solidarity,
Chloe Feit**